

I have had a fascination with all things British since I was young. I attribute this interest in part to an English aunt with whom I spent quite a bit of time while young, and then a yearlong class in high school on the subject of British history for which my textbook was Winston Churchill's *History of the English Speaking Peoples*

. Adding to this, during my business career, a British publicly-held company was a major investor in my company and, as a result, I traveled to England 2-3 times a year for nearly 10 years. At one time, I could rattle off every English monarch from William the Conqueror through Elizabeth II, including the years of their reigns.

I can't do that anymore. But, I know the place and people pretty well, and I like all things British, except of course, the weather. I even like the food!

Because of this knowledge and interest, I was asked to Co-Chair the US-UK caucus in the House of Representatives. We now have a bipartisan membership of 90 members of Congress. I have always considered the mission of this caucus as one of preserving and expanding the "special relationship" that exists and has existed between our two countries for some time. This special relationship has certainly benefited the citizens of both nations. But arguably, many millions and perhaps billions of people around the world live better or freer today because of the contributions, military sacrifices and political examples set by the Anglo-American alliance of the past 100 years. I don't think special relationships, be they personal or geopolitical, last without maintenance. Much has always been made of the special relationship between Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher, or of that between Tony Blair and George Bush. Our caucus is establishing similar personal relationships at an inter-parliamentary level, as well, just in case some future president and prime minister don't get along so well.

As a result of this involvement, the captivating Mrs. Campbell (for those of you who do not listen to the Hugh Hewitt show, I am referring to my wife, Catherine) and I were invited to a reception last Friday, "...in the presence of their Royal Highnesses, the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge," at the British Consul General's residence in Los Angeles. For those of you who are Anglophiles, those are the titles recently given to Prince William and his new wife, Catherine (Kate) Middleton.

I must tell you, both are engaging and charming people. Doing a "grip and grin" with people you do not know and may never see again is something of which we politicians do a lot. Royalty do it even more. The eye-contact, interest shown and engagement on the part of both the Duke and Duchess were very impressive and much better than I usually encounter in politics. You

might expect this from William since he, literally from birth, has been brought up to be King of England some day. But, Catherine Middleton was not. And, she was warm and likable, which are qualities not easy to project to hundreds of people every day.

My Catherine asked Duchess Catherine if she was looking forward to meeting any movie stars. The Duchess responded that she really didn't know any because she didn't watch movies. But, that William does and he has started to get her to watch movies, so she is now learning. My Catherine now considers the Duchess her new BFF.

As he exited the reception, I watched Prince William turn around and look across the crowd for his wife. I recognized the look in his eyes as one of protection of and longing for the one person in that gathering with whom he could be entirely himself. There is real love there, I think, which is not always the case in Royal matrimony.

Footballer (ok fine, soccer star) David Beckham was there (minus his pregnant wife Victoria, aka Posh Spice) and he and Kate Middleton are obviously friends.

While at the reception, I spoke to a young couple who were in their late 20s, as are the future King William and Queen Catherine. They remarked to me that they thought that the Royal couple could become very important spokespeople and models for their generation. Maybe so. They certainly seem to have a lot going for them. Some of you, and indeed some in Britain, think that the British monarchy is an out dated anachronism that should be abolished. Well, since I'm not British, I don't get a vote. However, I have always thought that societies do best when they move forward while maintaining some links to their history. No matter what you feel, I can tell you that these two are excellent Ambassadors for Britain and the British people, and perhaps for a new generation. And, they will help ensure that the special relationship between the US and the UK remains in place....and special.